



Reflection 3 – 2017

Prepare for your meditation by becoming aware of your breathing. Breathing reflects whatever state we are in. The most important thing is life is **BREATHING**. Breathing is about giving and receiving. When I give I receive. When I receive I give! The purpose of religion is to serve the Spirit. We serve the Spirit when we become aware of our breathing.

St Luke's Gospel is very strong on the **theme of hospitality**. To refuse hospitality destroys relationships as shown in Luke's story of the Prodigal Son. The father invites the son to come in and celebrate the return of his brother. He refuses to show hospitality:

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in.' - Luke 15:11-32

Pause for reflection.

Martha is a key figure of hospitality in John's Gospel. Martha shows hospitality towards the stranger. Martha entertained Jesus, the one who was sent. Martha prepared food for the guests.

Pause for reflection.

And now let us sing our mantra 'In Jesus' name:'

The mantra sings of the utter reverence and compassion with which Jesus responds to our vulnerability, brokenness and fragility. It calls us to do the same (in the spirit of hospitality), not only within our own spirits, but beyond ourselves to all those whose spirits and lives are crushed reeds and wavering flames. Give your thoughts and words time to echo this mantra.

IN JESUS' NAME – Mantra by Monica Brown

He does not break the crushed reed.
Nor quench the wavering flame.
In Jesus' name In Jesus' name.
Can we not do the same in Jesus' name?

Now reflect on the following two questions:

- What is your experience of giving hospitality?
- What is your experience of receiving hospitality?

Pause for reflection.

In our Chapter Statement of 2011 we (the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea) say the following:

- Mercy impels us to extravagant hospitality
- Compassion and Justice
- in the earth community
- being shattered by displacement.

This statement applies to all those who serve in Mercy!

Today we are focussing on the phrase '**impelled to extravagant hospitality**'.



In Gospel terms let us consider what true hospitality is about:

- it means receiving each other – guest and host
- it is about genuine mutuality
- it is about esteeming each with one's trust
- it is about respect and courtesy of undivided attention
- it is about helping one another to 'be at home'
- it is about sharing one's gifts and talents
- it is about the capacity to care
- it is about thinking well of others
- it is about goodness and honesty
- it is about the courage to be inclusive
- it enables us to recognise something of the God in the other
- it is about creating relationships particularly with those who appear different from us
- it is about welcoming the stranger.

So the phrase 'extravagant hospitality' has a wide berth of meaning. It is challenging and exciting. It has applications rich in the Gospel values.

Let us take some quiet time to reflect on these ideas of Gospel '**extravagant hospitality**'.

Some Questions to Consider:

- Can I show 'extravagant hospitality' in the way I receive others?
- Can I show 'extravagant hospitality' by trusting in God and others?
- Can I show 'extravagant hospitality' by sharing my gifts and talents with and others?
- Can I show 'extravagant hospitality' by taking the time to recognise something of the God in others?

Pause for reflection.

In the Gospel of Matt 25:35-40 we are strongly reminded of those who need our hospitality. These are the same needs incorporated in the Corporal Works of Mercy which were a very strong part in Catherine McAuley's work and life.

"When I was hungry you gave me to eat. When I was thirsty you gave me to drink. When I was in need of clothes you clothed me. When I was in prison you came to visit me".

The surprised disciples asked when did we do all these things? The King replied "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

Pause for quiet reflection

Let us pray:

- For the hungry – may we be gracious in sharing our food.
- For the stranger – may we be generous in our hospitality.
- For the homeless – may we reach out to the unloved and the unpopular.
- For those in prison – may we be sympathetic to their fear, sadness or illness.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Make our giving generous O God, ready to meet all needs, extending extravagant hospitality to the stranger.



Let us be one with the poor, the blind and the lame. While we remember prisoners who are not free – we thank you for the freedom you have given to us. Like the disciples, we invite you O Lord to stay with us as the day is nearly now spent. We pray that 'extravagant hospitality' will be our outward sign of following you. We make this prayer through Jesus, your Son. Amen.

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